

- c. a museum where the dead may contemplate the living.
- d. God's mandible.
- (e.) the photograph you took without depth-of-field or near-focus.
- f. all of the above.

A possible definition of "soul" would be

- a. one vacuum enclosed by another.
- b. a manifestation of St. Elmo's fire.
- c. voltage from a non-rechargeable battery.
- d. the body's point of total symmetry.
- e. the lingering echo of the birth-cry.
- (f.) the dream whose memory fades by breakfast.

III

In a short composition develop the concept of "Humanity as Ants."

Humanity is a flock of ants eating a dead whale. When it is consumed, they will die; for they are now addicted to whale.

— Robert L. Smith

New York NY

WALKING

You start from a motionless position, both at the beginning of the day and at the beginning of the walk proper, which usually coincides with your rising from a chair or bench. Once upright, relax your thigh muscles, feel your body start to lean forward, jut the left leg forward with its knee and ankle bent, tense the front thigh and the calf muscles of the right leg and push off as your balance begins to shift, attain a stable position by placing the left leg on the ground before you, let your momentum catch up and begin to topple you forward again, swing the right leg forward to catch yourself: you've taken a step.

The oak looms up, branches pointed like a charging stag's. Rocks lunge at your feet. Buildings sprout in your path. And the earth is hurtling through space at eighteen miles per second. And space is expanding, thrusting out in all directions at once. To walk is to navigate into a hail-storm of objects that can crack toes, bark shins, crush bones to powder. Understandably, your advance is irregular, uneven, your front foot dropping as an anchor while your back foot propels itself forward. Your body bobs up

and down like driftwood on the flood; you tilt and right yourself as if tugged by a whirlwind; you shake, shrink, expand and wobble, vibrating, about to disintegrate, every atom about to fly away from every other atom.

If you feel the numb surge of panic, consider: what can you do? Stop, and let the danger grow in your imagination until you can't budge? Show your fear to others and confirm their own anxieties, undermining their ability to perform the most necessary tasks? No. Establish a fair distance between you and the other pedestrians. Refrain from making eye contact. If friends call to you, wave but do not stop. Tell them, "I'm taking a walk."

THE RIGHT HAND

The pawn of the ego, the right hand thrusts out to scribble its name wherever it can wedge a space: on checks, contracts, walls, inside books written by other right hands. It works at envelopes as if prying oysters, throws box lids aside, rips through wrapping paper. In all things it sees only a use for itself. When it wants to show firmness, it pounds a table. When it wants to show sympathy, it strokes a kitten. While the left arm lounges on the car's window sill, the right hand grips the wheel, determined on control, bent and dour as Jonathan Edwards at prayer. Even relaxed, the thumb and first finger lean toward each other, making a deflated "OK" sign, a "can do" waiting to flex its muscles.

THE LEGS

Goaded by the horns of a metaphysical dilemma, the mind gives the body its walking orders. The legs present themselves, first one, then the other. The dialectical motion of walking, the two-pronged advance like that of thesis and antithesis, would seem to make the legs the darlings of Hegelians. Yet the legs are of little actual help. They tend to turn and retrace ground just covered. Their appearance deceives. Dressed or naked, they appear twins, when in fact they are mirror images of each other, exactly opposite rather than identical.

The mind, like the body, works best with one foot on the ground. The legs are connecting cables. Muscular and hairy, capable of repeating without complaint the same task day in, day out, they are, if not pastoral, rustic and rude. They leave the stars uncharted and map only terra firma. Allowed to plod on in their customary way, they are uncannily accurate, presenting not a representation of a place, but the place itself. Their work is